

DSC Fundraising Now Corporate Partnership Reflection

A charity cannot market itself successfully unless it deeply understands what it can and cannot offer a corporate partner. As a follow up to I.G. Advisors' workshop at DSC Fundraising Now, consider the following questions and note your answers. These will focus your search for corporate partners and become the backbone of your pitch.

1. Reflect on your needs, ambitions and offering

Question	Your Answer
<p>1. Are we a trusted brand? <i>Even as a small organisation, having a solid reputation offers fantastic potential to a company. Equally, charities that have been affected by controversy will have a difficult time developing partnerships until they sort out their internal affairs. If the latter is true, what steps need to be taken?</i></p>	
<p>2. Is our cause especially attractive to certain types of companies or industries? <i>Interests align due to geography, values, goals and approach. The answers may be obvious – for example, health charities and pharmaceutical organisations; but out-of-box thinking can highlight other opportunities.</i></p>	
<p>3. Is there an initiative we are working on that would benefit from a product, service or approach offered by a company? <i>In other words, can something a company is doing help you to achieve your social impact quicker or better or more cost effectively?</i></p>	
<p>4. Can our work help to mitigate a risk that the company is facing? <i>Risks may include reputation issues, staff turnover, supply chain concerns, or negative social and environmental impacts in the communities in which they operate.</i></p>	
<p>5. Are we working on a cause that the public considers especially important and current? Is our cause likely to turn some companies off?</p>	

Hot topics, such as gender equality and climate change, may catch the attention of a company seeking to present itself as current and on trend. However, you should consider whether your cause would be considered too cutting edge for some.

6. Are we local, national, or international?
It is extremely valuable for the partners in a cause-related alliance to have similar structures and objectives. So are you a locally based charity, focusing on local causes, a large national campaign or an international NGO working on global issues?

7. Do we have a charismatic or well-recognised CEO, Chair, Founder or Advocate?
Such a person, who can garner media coverage and inspire the company's leadership and employees to participate, is of great value.

8. What do we really 1) need and 2) want from a corporate partnership?
Be honest. Is it funding? Is it training for the organisation or your beneficiaries? Is it exposure? Is it for a company to help you solve a social problem? Rank in order of importance. Know what you want, and what you do not want before you ask for support.

9. What resources do we have to manage a corporate partnership?
Do you have a dedicated staff member who will cultivate and manage corporate relationships? Be realistic about what you can offer.

10. Communications
Companies are often keen to leverage the communications opportunities of the partnership – by telling the story of the social impact, internally and externally. Your communications capability and strength of your assets will undoubtedly be considered.

2. Scope potential corporate partners

Only once you have assembled your answers to the above should you begin your in-depth research into your potential partners. Be thorough – review published reports, strategic plans and articles.

Search for thematic overlaps; services or products your organisation would benefit from; alignment in brand, values, goals, geographic focus; and previous / current social engagement and giving history.

3. Focus on building relationships

Regardless of whether there are any publicly stated timelines or contacts for dealing with corporate partnership requests, you will need to cultivate and build relationships to be successful. If you're struggling to find a direct connection to a company, try these tips –

1. Identify key decision makers within the organisation
2. Map networks that exist through your senior leadership and board to link you to your prospects
3. Use LinkedIn to identify and connect with useful contacts
4. Develop a tailored cultivation and action plan with a calendar of touch points and engagements